

For Immediate Release
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Media Contact: Raquel M. Filmanowicz
414-286-3175 Office
414-397-1614 Mobile

City of Milwaukee Health Department Investigates a Possible Pediatric Influenza Death

Case may represent first death in Milwaukee since 2004, still not too late to get flu shot

The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) is currently investigating a report of a potential pediatric influenza death within the City of Milwaukee. If confirmed, this case would represent the first reported pediatric influenza death in Wisconsin for this season and the first case overall in the City of Milwaukee since surveillance was initiated in 2004. This case does not represent an outbreak in our community nor does it suggest a lack of effectiveness of current influenza vaccine.

“Unfortunately, young children are at high risk for complications of influenza infection,” said Bevan K. Baker, Commissioner of Health. “This season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have specifically recommended that children 6 months to 5 years of age receive vaccination to prevent serious illness that can result from seasonal influenza infection.” Flu vaccine is still in good supply within the community and it is still not too late to receive the vaccination.

Influenza causes an estimated 36,000 deaths per year in this country, primarily among the elderly, infants, and those with serious chronic diseases. Other individuals at high-risk for complications of influenza infection include persons 65 years of age or older, pregnant women and anyone with an underlying chronic illness such as diabetes, cardiovascular or respiratory disease. Persons should seek medical care for symptoms that are either persistent or severe.

It is important to remind the public that good hand hygiene and cough etiquette are essential to reducing the spread of diseases such as influenza as well as other respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases. Regular hand-washing, and covering the nose and mouth when coughing, are effective preventive measures and are especially important for protecting infants under 6 months of age who are too young to be vaccinated against influenza.

The MHD will hold two clinics to provide childhood immunizations including flu vaccinations on Saturday, February 10, 2007 at the Southside Health Center located at 1639 South 23rd Street and the Keenan Health Center located at 3200 N. 36th Street. Additional information is available on the MHD website www.milwaukee.gov/health or by calling the MHD flu hotline at 414-286-3616.